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My Lady of Dream

LLOYD MIFFLIN

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MY
LADY OF DREAM

BY

LLOYD MIFFLIN

Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.

—WORDSWORTH

HENRY FROWDE
LONDON:
AMERICAN BRANCH
New York, 91–93 Fifth Avenue
1906

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Plates by Rose Valley Press
Presswork by Wickersham Co., Lancaster, Pa., U. S. A.

PREFATORY

In these poems, called "My Lady Of Dream", I have sought to apostrophize in an elusive way that Spirit which has ever been very dear to me and at whose feet I have offered many years of my life.

L. M.

NORWOOD,
November 15, 1904.

THE LIBATION

All honor to the Maid divine!
Deep homage doth to her belong
Who points the pathway to my goal;
For her I spill no mortal wine,
But from the chalice of my soul
I pour the ænomel of Song!

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THE READER IS IMPORTUNED

Warily tread o'er the delicate bridge
of dreams
Builded in silence from tremulous cobweb
and mist,
Warily over the chasm of cloud and of
streams
High on the vapory arches of amethyst;
Shake off the dust of the world and the
care that clings;
Gird on the sandals that give to the feet
their wings;
Airily, pray you, airily spirit along;

Thin is the fabric and wove of the veriest
film of song,—
Wavers, and sways, and is not what
it seems,—
Warily, warily over the Bridge of Dreams.

THE LOVER DESCRIBES HIS BELOVED

A rose she is, most passing fair,
That makes more sweet the summer air
For one day only;
A solitary cloud at noon,
That melting in the dome of June,
Leaves the blue lonely:

A bird at dawn that upward flies
And falls from out the scarlet skies
Of Eldorado;
A murmuring shell upon the shore

Swirled sudden down beneath the roar
To realms of shadow:

A sumptuous moth, in autumn hours,
A-flutter o'er ephemeral flowers
In vain endeavor;
A firefly in the fields of even,
That lights a little space of heaven,
Then fades for ever.

"O LOVELY THY FEET"

O lovely thy feet shod with sandals
resounding;
O silver the echo o'er mountain and
valley
Far over the hills of the morning!

I follow the print that thy sandals
are making;
I follow the sound of thy footsteps
arising
Far over the hills of the morning.

O help me to mount from the earth to
the ether;

Like thee, let me rise to the regions
celestial
Away on the wings of the morning!

HE BEGS FOR HER FAVOR

Lo, I stoop and embrace thy sweet knees,
And my face which is white with desire
low is laid in thy lap.
Take thy hands, O Beloved, lay them faint
on my neck,
And thy lips, bend them down and breathe
tremulous words, giving comfort and love;
Soothe thy lover with hope of thyself;
With the rose of thy beauty decoy him to
thee;
With thy spirit encurtain us round as the
gloaming envelopes the vale.

I am sick of deceit; of the hardness of
hearts; of the absence of love.
Lo, I bury my face in the lily—thy lap;
Leave me not; take thy hands, O Beloved,
lay them faint on my neck, soothe
and solace with tremulous words.

THE LOVER PROTESTS

At eve about the wooded hills I roam;
Devious the ways I tread, and far from home:
I care not, Sweet, how wide the winding be—
Love curves the path and circles back to thee.

THE SWEETNESS OF HIS BELOVED

Dull life were then indeed worth while,
Bathed in the languor of her smile.

Enough it were to soothe despair—
To touch, in dreams, her twilight hair.

'Twere worth the wisdom of the wise
To live upon her dream-dim eyes.

Famished, to muse upon her mouth
Were gushing wells in lands of drouth.

To hope to touch her virgin lips
Whirls the calm brain in wild eclipse;

But on her heart to draw one's breath—
Such bliss would poniard one to death!

THE LIPS OF HIS BELOVED

Fragrance and balm of ethereal isles;
Perfume exhaled from the gates of the day;
Languorous zephyrs all heavy with song
As winds that have lingered in lyres of love;
Raptures as keen as the skylark's aloft
When fading to poesy far in the cloud;
Passion and pathos and mystery deep;
Solace, and spur to the spirit of light:
For these, lo, I spill all my soul
On the sweetness that lies in the rose of
her mouth.

HE INVOKES HER PRESENCE

Out of the glory Aurora will lend her;
  Up from the diamond dew of the lea;
Down from the sunset of sumptuous splendor,
  Delicate Spirit, hither to me!

Out of the caverns of lightning and thunder;
  Up from the glimmering green of the sea;
Down from the stars with their fathomless wonder,
  Delicate Spirit, hither to me!

Up from the dark of Death's Lethean portal;
  Out of the regions where Life and Love be;
Down from the flaming-winged Seraphs immortal,
  Delicate Spirit, hither to me!

HIS SOURCE OF LIGHT

I'm like the gray cloud just above
  The dawn ere day 's begun,
And thou my source of light, my Love,
  Thou art my morning sun.
Pale am I till I feel thy beam,
  Till life thy light bestows,
And then a golden cloud I seem
  Bathed in celestial rose.

"SOUL OF THE DUSK"

Delicate Sprite! Thou fair elusive maid,
  Poised in thy grace above the hill-top low;
Soul of the dusk above the valley shade,
  Seen in the after-glow,
Sink softly down within the woods afar,
  Lily the upland with thy presence sweet,
Nestle amid the fern, e'en as a star,
  To guide me to thy feet.

To thy pure self, as to some holy shrine,
  I, who in Love's dear ways was sorely crossed,
Come with cooled lips to touch thy brow divine,
  No longer passion-tossed.

O Spirit of that thin and finer air
That lights the summits which to thee belong,
Raise me to regions infinitely fair
That tremble into song.

Leave me not yet within the lonely woods;
Linger, a radiance o'er the laureled gloom;
O lift me to supernal altitudes
Of amaranthine bloom!

. . . . . .

Slowly she fadeth from my yearning sight,
Yet in my soul her presence do I greet:
Adieu, dark vale, I camp upon the height—
I, who would kiss her feet.

"THY VOICE IN THE VALLEY"

Thy voice in the valley at evening is sweetness
unheard of.
I hear not the coo of the dove when thou
speakest;
E'en the lay of the mavis is discord;
All the throats of the woodland are silenced;
Thou drawest thy honey from fabulous flowers
of feeling.
Thy limbs are as smooth as the limbs of the
white birch in winter;
The lace of thy garments is fine as the bloom
of wild parsnip, or dew-spangled cobweb
in meadows of morn;

Thy breasts are as fair as the blossoms of elder
in shadowy places;
Thine eyes—like the eyes of the oxen of Ind;
Thy breath is a wafture from beds of tea-roses
in gardens of silence:
Thou hast stolen my soul; thou hast ravished
my senses;
Lo, I faint in thine arms, o'ercome by thy
sweetness!

ALONE IN DECEMBER PATHS

Along the slopes of grasses gray
  Against the windy hill
The slender beeches gently sway
  Leafless, above the mill;
And silent up the dreary shores
  Denuded now, I trace
The white masts of the sycamores
  At anchor by the race.

Above the windy thicket high
  Circle the cawing crows,
And round the barren foot-path sigh
  The briers of the rose:

O leaden clouds that frown above
  Soon would you disappear
If but the maiden of my love
  Were strolling with me here.

Oh, tell her that I only seek
  Herself in earth and skies—
The lilied garden of her cheek,
  The April of her eyes:
Far o'er the windy thicket high
  Circle the cawing crows,
And round the barren foot-path sigh
  The briers of the rose.

HE FOLLOWS HER LIGHT

Howl on, ye winter midnight wind!
  Stab, javelins of the sleet!
But I have set my constant mind
  To nestle at her feet.

Oh, while the waves in furious glee
  Wreck the unbeaconed bark,
Though blinded, love would make me see
  Her candle through the dark!

Eager, I dare the blizzard's might:
  Joyous, I face the snow,
For on her breast I rest to-night—
  Then let the tempest blow!

"CRUSH THY HANDFUL OF ROSES"

Crush thy handful of roses against my pale
lips, paled with song and with care;
And smother mine eyes with their odorous
petals
Lest I, looking up, behold all thy beauty,
O fairest of fair!

Withdraw to the heart of thy cloud, and curtain
thy loveliness off from my sight
Lest I, being mortal, and seeing too near
me thy beauty,
Should die of deep yearning and hopeless
delight.

"CANST THOU FOR THIS ATONE"

My life was in its Autumn, as I lay
  Dreaming upon an upland o'er the sea.
  Lonely I was as Lydian Niobe
When all her pearls Apollo took away.
Then came a beauteous woman fair as day,
  Who gave herself and all her love to me;
  Anon sweet children clambered round my knee
Eager for kisses,—and the time seemed May.
These children's children came, and I was grown
  Agèd and worn, but still on them I smiled
  For love of them and of the mother mild.
Sudden I woke—childless, forlorn, alone . . .

O Poësy! canst thou for this atone?—
Thou who hast reft me thus of wife and child?

"O LEAVE THY FLAMING HARP INVIOLATE"

O leave thy flaming harp inviolate on the
height;
Undo thy sandals made of music and of
song;
Lo I, thy lover, in the vale have waited
long,
Descend and star the darkness, my Delight!

Thy breath is sweet as blossoming grape-vine
in the dell,
Or as fragrance borne from locust-trees
abloom;

Breathe on me, radiant Spirit, and aureole
the gloom,
Touch the lyre of my heart—the prose of
life dispel.

Teach me to use the plectrum that loves thy
fingers lithe;
My time is brief,—around me hover Shades
and shadowy Things;
I hear the hoofs of pallor,—the wind and
whirl of wings,—
The roaring in the darkness of the fateful
scythe.

HIS LADY ELUDES HIS PURSUIT

When the Horses of the Morning with their
rose-colored wings lifted high,
Come with lyre-like music far-echoing down the
flushed pearly lanes,
Beating with eager hoofs new splendor from the
waste of crimson sky,
Dazzling the charioteer with flare of backward-
flowing manes;
When the Winds from twilight caverns of the
Dawn arise,
Stretching their languorous arms, loosening the
fillets of their fragrant hair,

Drowsed with the thought of night in troublous
deeps of dream-lit eyes,
Awake to wander forth on viewless pinions from
their lair;
Then my Lady of Light, my Love, whom from
days of old
I peered on with passionate yearning and lips
parched as with fire,
Withdrew from my vision her lilies of beauty—
her hair of pale gold,
And plunged me in midnight of day, consumed
of desire.

"SPEAK SOFTLY, BELOVED"

Speak softly, Belovèd, I am hungered for hearing
thy voice which is filled with dark meaning.
I will gather the pearls falling down from thy
lips;
I will string them together upon threads of gold
and hang them over my neck;
And when sorrow and silence appear and thou
art away,
I will tell all the beads like a nun;
I will murmur thy jewel-like words till they
solace my soul:
So, Belovèd, speak only dark and beautiful
words.

HE RETURNS AFTER ABSENCE

As the humming-bird comes to the flame of
the crimson canna;
As the bees to the press, when the juice of
the grape drips purple;
So do I, my Belovèd, return after tedious
absence
To thy lips that are heavy with honey and
passionate fragrance.

THE TRYST WITH HIS LOVE

When the wings of the twilight-legion
  And the ghosts of the sunset pale,
I float in the nebulous region
  Of a spirit-haunted vale:
By the marge of the mystical river
  I make of my love a lyre,
For she is a reed a-quiver,
  And I am the wind, her desire.

"WHAT SHALL ATONE"

What shall atone for studious days
  Spent at the Muse's cruel side?
What recompense wilt thou provide
For labor sore in making lays—
  One of thy wreathèd bays,
    Calliope?

Think of the long nights spent with thee,
  When other men were glad with wine,
With woman's love they deemed divine,
While I was lone as islands be
  Within a sailless sea,
    Calliope!

Would any wreath thou couldst bestow—
  Albeit all wreaths of thine are vain—
Repay for half this life-long pain?
Thy laurels for some happier brow;
  I need not laurels now,
    Calliope.

Still wear to me thine ancient frown;
  Be heartless, as thou wast of old,
And yield me neither rest nor gold;
I scorn thy proffer of renown,
  For Death, too, brings a crown,
    Calliope!

"SADLY SHE SITS UPON HER DAZZLING THRONE"

Not the close friendship of the closest friends,
Nor wealth descending on her golden wings;
Titles nor honor,—no ephemeral things,—
Can, for the lack of her, e'er make amends.
She will not stoop to sublunary ends
Nor touch the baubles which the base world brings;
Her song unpurchasable still she sings,
And all her soul upon the singing spends.
She treads her constellated paths alone
Sandaled with starry aspirations bright,

Beyond the visions of this world—how far!
Sadly she sits upon her dazzling throne
In fading splendor like a lingering star
That pales at sunrise in the wastes of light!

"COME, LET US LIE ON THE HILLS"

Come, O my love, let us lie on the hills as
the clouds of the evening are crumbling
to amethyst dust.
Now the pinions of twilight are over the vale
and the woodlands grow dim in the dell.
Lo, thy hair,—let it fall o'er thy lily-white
arm like the strings of a lyre,
And a wind from the meadows of Eros shall
sigh through the chords,
And at last thou wilt yield,—thou wilt com-
fort thy lover with love;

Thou wilt know that the wind is his soul
that is longing and wasting away for
thy sweetness adored;
Oh, at last—at the last—thou wilt yield!
Come! let us lie on the hills side by side
as the embers of evening are crumbling
to ashes away.

HE TELLS WHEN HER SPIRIT IS FAIREST

Thy spirit suits not with the garish hour;
Too delicate thy cloistral bloom;
Thou, like some austral orchid flower,
Unfold'st thy beauty but in gloom:

Fair in the morn,—but lovelier far, Sweetheart,
In thy dim chamber's hushed lamp-light:
O Love! the hyacinth itself thou art—
Most fragrant at the dead of night.

"LO, THOU SITTEST ENTHRONED"

Lo, thou sittest enthroned on thy rolling
cloud,
As aloft are lifted in scorn thine inscrutable
eyes;
Not deigning to look on thy lover, low
bowed,
As in silence enforced, all despairing he
lies.
O look down from thy white rolling throne
in the skies;
Lift, O Spirit, thy lover aloft to the cloud
round thee curled;

With thy harp teach his soul how to solace
the sighs,
And to drop Song in showers all over the
world.

"ANGEL OF PEACE!"

Drowsy thou liest on thy poppied bed
Inamorata of the realms of air!
Goddess or queen or spirit, passing fair,
Rise from thy slumberous pillow where is spread
In lustrous darkness round thy starry head
The wondrous wealth of thine ethereal hair—
Still whisper to me from thy dusky lair
Or Atropos shall cut the silver thread!
Clear source and fountain of my fleeting lays,
Angel of peace, and saint that comforteth,
Thy lips were on my mouth—I drew thy breath—

Thine arms enwrapt me through thy shadowy
ways,—
O thou divine consoler of my days
Be near me in the darkness after death!

"THE MILLION LILIES OF GOLD"

The million lilies of gold that bloom in the blue
I will gather and place at your beautiful feet;
And the delicate shallop that sails in the after-
glow—
Silver and slender and sweet—
Shall anchor in daffodil pools to be nearer to you;
While her sister, the lamp of the gloaming, swaying
low
In vaults of the orange sky
Shall pause a-pant with delight;
And when you are nigh
In the night,
The censers unseen

That carry the breath of the perfumed air
Swaying in moonlit spaces afar,
Shall wave an impalpable wing
With odor of roses around you their Queen;
And about you forever the darkest thing
Shall still be a star;
And the Genii shall take the cloud of your dim sweet hair
As a mist afloat in the morn,
And cast it over the helpless hearts of men—
Over serf, over king,
And the bridegroom shall turn from the bride nor think she is fair—
Shall desert her and desire you again;
And I, who loved you before I was born,
Shall love you forever and die of despair.

A LAST WORD TO THE LADY OF HIS LOVE

When this passionate heart is placed at last
upon Love's own pyre,
And the wraith of it, incense-like, ascends
to the twilight sky,
Take the words I whispered once on a time,
O soul of my soul's desire,
And croon them low on the violet banks
where we were wont to lie.

AT THY DEAR FEET

As some stray carrier-pigeon onward hies
O'er alien spire and dim cathedral dome,
With weakening pinions that reluctant roam
Athwart the blank, inhospitable skies;
Famished and faint, with eager, yearning eyes,
Whirled by the wind above the mad sea foam,
Till, at the last, outworn, he gains his home,
Falls at his mistress' feet, content, and dies:
So unto thee, sweet Spirit of all Song,
Weak and full weary with world-wanderings,
We wing the trackless deserts of our sky;
Truant to thee, O Poësy, too long,

We reach thy feet at last with bleeding wings,
And fain would nestle near thy heart to die!

"AND WHEN AT LAST THE PORTALS LOOM"

O Spirit of the lustrous Nine,
Who art the fountain of my lays,
The source of all the rapturous days
That radiant come to me,
Through all this minstrel life of mine
Desert me not, O thou divine
Mnemosynè!
Mnemosynè!

And when at last the portals loom,
When I shall drink Death's drowsy wine

And long-loved valleys must resign—
Blue peak, and sky, and sea—
When darkly sinks the pall of doom
Oh, be thou with me through the gloom
Mnemosynè!
Mnemosynè!

HER LOVER DEFIES THE RAVEN-BLACK STEEDS

Too happy were we, O my Delight!
For I saw the raven-black Horses afar
Ramp on the edge of a cloud to-night
And I feared they were winging to us with a curse,
For the chariot they drew
Had a place for two;
It was sable-plumed like a hearse,
And stopped by a cloud-like grave:
Too happy were we, O my Delight . . .
Look in mine eyes,—need we fear alarms? . . . .

A long wild kiss like the first you gave! . . .
There! . . let them come—
The Horses of Night,
Let them take us locked in each other's arms!

"BESEECH ME NO MORE"

Beseech me no more, it is in vain,
O daughters of that which passeth away,
Whose lips with long kisses enchain,
Whose blood is as quick as the sap in May,
Beseech me no more, for there grows
In the dells of my heart, hidden deep,
My Lady of Peace, my Delight, my Rose,
Whose look is as lilies divine
And whose eyes are as day.
Do you not see her dim as a cloud on the steep
Beckoning still as she goes?
Ah, daughters of that which passeth away,

I am drawn to the side
Of my beautiful bride
Who will hold the cup as I drink her wine;
And when I have waded the River of Sleep
That slips through the Valley of Dreams
Where nothing is and where everything seems,
And all is divine,
She will hold me fast
As I lie by her side,
She will fold me at last—at last,
And I shall be hers, and she will be mine.

"IMPERIAL INVENTRESS"

O guardian of the sought-for sacred fire;
Mother of splendors springing from the mind;
Imperial Inventress, let me find
Melodious solace great as my desire!
Grant me to waken thine impassioned lyre
To most mellifluous music, and unbind
The bands of silence; oh, once more be kind
E'en unto me, the least among thy choir!
O Breath of Godhead, voicing mysteries
That mortal men, unheeding, seldom hear,
Fain would my spirit bend a reverent ear
To feast upon thy heavenly harmonies!

Come through the sunset gates, or on the breeze
Memnonian, murmur to me, spirit clear;
Breathe solace and dispel this life-long tear
By mystic music sweeter than the sea's!
Give to this essence flaming seraph wings,
Or burn it, incense-like, to thee and thine,
Upon thy altar with its purging fire;
Strike thou at last from out these trembling strings
Apocalypses of the inner shrine—
O Breath of God! make of my soul thy lyre!

"I FEEL THY SPIRIT CALL ME"

I feel thy Spirit call me from afar;
And if in silence now these steps I wend,
This forced aphonia shall not last for long;
Not here, indeed, but in some fairer star,
Fed from immortal rills, I hope to end
A life ineloquent, with affluent Song.

"COME NEARER, MY BELOVED"

Come nearer, my Belovèd, it is night;
Bend down above my bed thy features mild;
No wife have I to love, nor tender child—
Thou wert mine angel,—wilt thou take thy flight—
Thou! with thine eyes of pity infinite,
And leave me dying and unreconciled?
It was the sweetness of *thy* lips beguiled
Life of its pang and made the darkness bright:
Oh, lean down nearer—nearer—do not fly—
Have we not loved each other well and long?
Leave me not now, my heart—my soul—my song—

Belovèd Spirit! Oh to thee I cry,—
Wrap thy dear arms around me—hold me strong—
Oh, wake me with thy kisses when I die!

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